

Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway

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This On30 layout (American 'O' Scale (1:48) but on HO track) portrays the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railway's Three Foot Gauge service in Colorado from Denver to Durango (450 miles) and then on to Silverton (a further 45 miles) or along the branch to Farmington in New Mexico (50 miles) run here as a Colorado & Southern line.

The date is set around 1905 at the peak of freight and ore transportation for the precious metals (mainly silver) mining industry in Colorado. The layout is based on Durango and its silver ore smelter. There are about 1.5 scale miles of track with 38 turnouts ('points') and a scale 48 foot diameter turntable. Electric Dual Cab Control enables any two engines to be run at the same time (but not on the same track).

The emphasis at this Show will be on the Colorado & Southern trains running on the Durango/Farmington branch line. Today these trains are supplemented by Colorado & Southern engines and rolling stock belonging to Bryan Spencer who is a new Member of the Gosport American Model Railroad Group. Bryan is in the initial stages of building an On30 (possibly portable) layout based around the Colorado & Southern. His layout will have a lumber operation so look out here today for his Climax and Shay geared engines busy at work hauling his collection of log cars around my layout conveying lumber to the (freelance model) sawmill at Durango.

During the Show Bryan and I will be assessing the possibility of linking my portable layout in due course to his when finished (assuming that he opts for a portable one). Perhaps the link could be made by a portable (trestle?) bridge for use at Group Shows but we are open to suggestions so please let us have your thoughts and ideas.

The layout shown today features metallic ores brought down from Silverton for smelting, coal for the smelter moved from the Durango City Coal Mine just south of Durango, lumber hauled from the Posta forests for the Durango Sawmills, and livestock movements (sheep from Silverton, beef cattle and horses from Farmington). The Denver & Rio Grande Western mail trains between Durango and Denver will run as usual today but the other D&RGW services to Chama, Alamosa and Silverton are suspended whilst we concentrate on running the Colorado & Southern operations.

The last narrow gauge train to leave Denver (in the late 1950's) was a Colorado & Southern one – the Denver & Rio Grande Western by then having changed over to standard gauge for most of its operations and what little narrow gauge it had left was on the line south of Alamosa which was soon to be abandoned or parts sold off (the latter becoming today's Cumbres & Toltec and Durango & Silverton lines). The Colorado & Southern itself was later to close down but some small parts of it have survived such as the (now diesel hauled) Leadville Colorado & Southern tourist line.

The layout buildings around Durango (Smelter, Station, Freight Depot, Engine House and Coaling Tower) have been modelled on the Denver & Rio Grande originals (many of which have been demolished, altered or rebuilt over the years since 1905).

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The rolling stock is mostly of the period but with variations in livery. Some Denver & Rio Grande Western passenger cars (as well as engine 138) have the Bumblebee (Rio Grande Gold) livery. The other engines are in the customary Vanderbilt (black) livery but many have silver-grey smokeboxes and chimneys. All the engines are equipped with working headlights, and the cabooses, passenger cars and baggage cars have internal lights.

Colorado & Southern Mogul number 21 has arrived on the Farmington Branch which brings the all-steam Engine Register total up to 15. The Register now consists of two Porter 0-4-0 coal-fired Switchers, one Porter 0-4-2 wood-burning Switcher, one 2-4-4 Forney coal-fired Tank, nine 2-6-0 coal-fired Moguls and the Colorado Mining Company's 28 Ton coal-fired Climax and 14 Ton wood-burning Shay – the latter are geared engines used for haulage along temporary lightweight tracks laid in mining and forestry locations. Also running on the layout today are the Colorado & Southern and Climax and Shay engines belonging to Bryan Spencer so watch out for these visitors. This brings us to engine driving – for which please read the next paragraph!

If you would like to drive an engine please ask the Engineer Staff who will show you how to use a mobile throttle. If you are new to model railways the Group hopes that driving an engine today will encourage you to take up railway modelling as a hobby - one from which you can derive much enjoyment as well as acquiring new friends and the skills for construction and operation of a layout of your own. Come and join us!

Please feel free to give advice and ask questions about the layout and today's feature of Colorado & Southern narrow gauge operations – your interest will be appreciated.

Bryan Spencer and I hope that you have enjoyed watching our narrow gauge layout display and we look forward to the pleasure of your company at the Group's next Show on Saturday 19th November – a date for your Diary!

John Feltham (Member of Gosport American Model Railroad Group and the British Region's Solent Sub-Division of the National Model Railroad Association (USA))